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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/PD:AGRIMES, EAP/MTS:TFORSYTH, ECA/V/F/A:CAINMX

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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [KISL](#) [PREL](#) [BX](#)

SUBJECT: PROMOTING U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION IN BRUNEI.

¶1. A Bruneian student's achievement of a perfect 2400 score on the SAT Reasoning Test has provided evidence that past efforts to promote U.S. higher education in cooperation with the Government of Brunei (GOB) are having some effect, and also given us an opportunity to further publicize U.S. education opportunities to a local audience.

¶2. Charlene Bong, a Bruneian secondary school student from Kuala Belait, was only one of 238 students to achieve a perfect score on the recent SAT's, out of a total of 1,465,744 who took the test worldwide. After Embassy learned of Ms. Bong's accomplishments, we invited her and her parents to meet with the Ambassador at the Embassy on November 23 so that he could offer his personal congratulations. On November 25, the local English daily "Borneo Bulletin" (readership of 150,000) and Malay daily "Media Permata" ran a page three story on Ms. Bong's achievement and her meeting with the Ambassador, based on an Embassy press release. The story quoted the Ambassador as saying that Ms. Bong's accomplishment "shows that Brunei's educational system is producing students who can compete for the admission to the most prestigious university programs in the United States," and that "the door to higher education in the U.S. is wide open." (Read the online version of article 'KB Schoolgirl Hits Perfect Score in US College Admission Test' at http://brunei.usembassy.gov/media_coverage.htm)

¶3. During her meeting with the Ambassador, Ms. Bong told us that she had already submitted an early action application to Stanford, hoped to study physics either there or at MIT, and would also apply to several other U.S. schools if not accepted early at Stanford. The choice of schools to which she is applying was determined largely by their presence on a list of recommended universities given to her by the Ministry of Defense (MOD), which identified her as a potential recipient of its "Supreme Commander Scholarship Scheme" for study at one of the recommended institutions on the basis of her scores on Brunei's A-level scholastic tests. According to Ms. Bong and her parents, it was this offer of a GOB scholarship to U.S. schools that made it financially feasible for her to consider study in the U.S. and so encouraged her to take the SAT and apply to Stanford.

¶4. Comment: The news that an MOD scholarship may make it possible for this outstanding young scholar to attend a U.S. university is particularly gratifying, since the inclusion of American institutions on the list of MOD-recommended schools is new this year and the direct result of Embassy's work to promote U.S. education. We have conducted a concerted campaign to encourage Bruneians to look beyond their traditional higher education destinations in the UK and Australia, which respectively host approximately 1,000 and 400 Bruneian students (as compared to less than two dozen in the U.S.). As part of that campaign, post worked with Department to use Voluntary Visitor programs and other tools to familiarize MOD officials with U.S. universities, and as a result they decided to include a number of American colleges on the list of recommended schools which their scholarship recipients could consider. The likely attendance of this perfect-SAT student at a U.S. university

on a GOB-funded scholarship is a welcome example that our efforts to promote U.S. education are paying off.

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